



# Federal Student Aid at a Glance

## WHO gets federal student aid?

**O**ur most basic eligibility requirements are that you must

- demonstrate financial need,
- be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen with a valid Social Security number, and
- show by one of the following means that you're qualified to obtain a postsecondary education:
  - ☐ Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate;
  - ☐ pass an approved ability-to-benefit test (if you don't have a diploma or GED, a school can administer a test to determine whether you can benefit from the education offered at that school);
  - ☐ meet other federally approved standards your state establishes; or
  - ☐ complete a high school education in a home school setting approved under state law.

## WHAT is federal student aid?

**I**t's financial help if you're enrolled in an eligible program as a regular student at a school participating in our federal student aid programs. (By "school," we mean a four-year or two-year public or private educational institution, a career school or a trade school.)

Federal aid covers school expenses, including tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation. Aid can also help pay for a computer and for dependent care.

There are three categories of federal student aid: grants, work-study and loans. Check with your school to find out which programs your school participates in.

## HOW do you apply for federal student aid?

1. Complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)*—the online version (*FAFSA on the Web*) or the paper FAFSA.

- For *FAFSA on the Web*, go to [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Using *FAFSA on the Web* is faster and easier than using paper.

- If you don't have Internet access, you can get a paper FAFSA from
  - ☐ a high school guidance office,
  - ☐ a college financial aid office,
  - ☐ a local public library, or
  - ☐ our Federal Student Aid Information Center at **1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)**.

**You can apply beginning January 1, 2006; you have until July 2, 2007 to submit your FAFSA. But, you need to apply early!** Schools and states often use FAFSA information to award nonfederal aid. Their deadlines are usually early in the year. You can find state deadlines online at *FAFSA on the Web*. The paper FAFSA lists state deadlines on the front of the form. Check with the schools you're interested in for their deadlines.

### 2. Review your *Student Aid Report (SAR)*.

After you apply, you'll receive a *Student Aid Report*. Your SAR contains the information reported on your FAFSA and usually includes your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC, a measure of your family's financial strength, is used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid. Review your SAR information as soon as you get it and make any corrections or changes, if necessary. The school(s) you list on your FAFSA will get your SAR data electronically. Schools not listed on your FAFSA must receive your complete, correct SAR data by your last day of enrollment or by September 17, 2007, whichever comes first.

### 3. Contact the school(s) you might attend.

Make sure the financial aid office at each school you're interested in has all the information needed to determine your eligibility. If you're eligible, each school's aid administrator will send you an award letter outlining the amount and types of aid (from all sources) the school will offer you. You can compare award letters from the schools you applied to and see what aid you can receive from each school.